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News of Literary Mags

To friends who claim that The Tamarack Review "may be good but it's dull," I retort that there are people who prefer the glare of chrome to the gleam of good silver. Tamarack may not be exciting but it wears well. For ten years it has been our most consistently good independent literary journal. It continues to offer readers a broad sampling of the best established writers here and abroad. Number 39, the Spring issue, included an excerpt from Marie-Claire Blais' new novel, and an introduction to it by Edmund Wilson; an interview with Isherwood on the theme of homosexuality in his work; new poems by Birney, Purdy, Layton and Livesay. There is also Hayden Carruth (an American critic) on Layton's Collected Poems. (Mr. Carruth is a tricky wire-walker: "Layton's poetry is ultimately interesting, very interesting, but it is not poetry you are likely to read twice." Surely few reviewers would risk such a conclusion after reading a poet's work only once?)

Tamarack's Number 40 is just out. I've had time to read only George Johnston (Icelandic scholar as well as poet) on Farley Mowat's version of the Vikings in Newfoundland; Nairn Kattan's round-up of Canadian novelists' views on Montreal as a French city; and Dennis Dufy's review of Leonard Cohen's Beautiful Losers. A salute to Tamarack for finding a reviewer who could properly assess that intriguing and shocking book: ". . . it's the sort of book that Susan Sontag . . . argues for, the sort of work you watch but don't attempt to explain. In its dazzling, centrifugal energy, Beautiful Losers resembles one of those Tinguely machines, a work of craftmanship and ingenuity, shaking itself to pieces. But what a shaking!"

Yes, Tamarack is still Canada's best source of sophisticated literary fare; but a number of new journals have recently entered the small magazine field, each contending vigorously for a portion of Tamarack's audience.

From the West three new journals have recently appeared. The West Coast Review (Simon Fraser University, Burnaby 2, British Columbia) is a tri-annual devoted to "English and French poetry, fiction, drama, music and art, as well as essays and reviews of books dealing with the arts and creativity . . . " A special feature will be "a continuing bibliography of avant-garde writing." (Issue number one offers "A Bibliography of Critical Writings on Samuel Beckett.") In addition, sixteen poets and two short-story writers are presented, most of them new to readers east of Winnipeg. The writing is fresh and vigorous--Editor, Candelaria, seems to have discovered a new vein of talent. I particularly enjoyed Stanley Cooperman's take-off on the Black Mountain aesthetic ("On Reading Charles Olson's Poetics." Perhaps parody is a form of flattery; in any case, it is also a relief to discover something funny about those Black Mountaineers.

Wascana Review (Wascana Parkway, Regina, Saskatchewan) is a semi-annual whose manifesto reads, in part--"Its aims are to publish the best poetry and fiction it can find; its editorial point of view is to seek impure criticism written by men (not bibliographies)." It is also interested in the fine arts and addresses itself not to Regina, or Canada, or North America, but to "whatever general audience our particular human voice will reach." The first issue offers nine poets, three fiction writers and four critics "from very many and very distant places." The two most interesting articles are Ted Boyle's "Explication of William Golding's Free Fall" and R. W. Harvey's study of the manuscript revisions of Lawrence's "Bavarian Gentians." It looks as if Wascana Review may favour close reading--a form of criticism little practised so far in Canada.

The Malahat Review, from the University of Victoria, British Columbia, is scheduled to appear on January 1, 1967. Editors Robin Skelton and John Peter (with Anthony Emery as art editor) have planned Malahat as an international quarterly and expect to publish material from Mexico, Spain, Ireland, Germany, China, Japan

and India. Each issue will contain a minimum of 120 pages, and will embrace short stories, poetry, short plays, critical articles and--as a special feature--literary memoirs and previously unpublished documents of literary interest from significant authors.

Malahat is not competing with Prism/International (an older B.C. journal). Prism features foreign poets in their own languages side by side with translations. Prism, by the way once a quarterly, has now become a tri-annual, and has recently launched a publishing program which will specialize in hardcover translations of contemporary foreign-language poets.

Another magazine, Western in origin and now in its fifth issue, is the lively and contentious Edge. This independent semi-annual has already had a stormy career. When in November 1964 a young Albertan high school teacher, Raymond Hertzog, was suspended for recommending the magazine to his class, Edge moved into the spotlight of notoriety and won thereby several thousand readers. Edge continued to hold the spotlight by airing the details of "the Hertzog case" and by continuous outspoken criticism of the Albertan government. Edge's fearless editor, Henry Beissel, held a teaching position in the English department of the University of Alberta (Edmonton)--an institution controlled largely by the government. It was easy, therefore, for the general public, the university administration and government officials to identify Edge with 'intellectuals' and especially with university professors. The government's Minister Without Portfolio, Mrs. Ethel Wilson, publicly denounced Edge in phrases which the editor has since proudly used an an advertisement: "Edge," she said, "is the worst kind of junk now available. I don't know how we can do anything about cleaning up the literature available to teenagers when the university produces filth worse than anything on the newstand." Naturally the university administrators were alarmed.

Professor Henry Beissel no longer teaches at Edmonton. After spending two years in the Caribbean, where he spoke out loud and clear about the deficiencies of educa-

tion in the West Indies, he returned to Canada. He is now in Montreal, a member of the English Department of Sir George Williams. He brought his magazine with him and it is still an independent journal, not sponsored by the university.

The fifth issue of Edge, now available (the new editorial address is P.O Box 36, Station H, Montreal), contains articles on the arctic and on apartheid, several poems and short stories, a radio play by W. O. Mitchell and art work by Colville, Shadbolt, Town, Yates, Siqeiros and others. Rich fare, and not to be labelled provincial in any sense. Edge Number Six, due in the Spring, will no doubt reflect editor Beissel's opinions on educational reform in Quebec. He has already tested the temperature here by expressing (in a letter to the Editor of the Star) an adamant protest against religious indoctrination in the schools.

Edge is ambitious to become a first-rate independent journal of opinion and the arts. Its quality has steadily improved and one can only hope that it continues in its lively and forthright manner without lapsing into a habit of controversy merely for the sake of controversy.

Among Little Magazines, the biggest news is that Yes (4286 Graham Drive, Pierrefonds, Quebec), edited by Michael Gnarowski and Glen Siebrasse, will incorporate Louis Dudek's Delta. The loss of Delta (the last issue of which is now available) is to be regretted for its voice was distinct amongst Canadian Literary periodicals; but it will be interesting to observe the extent (if any) to which Delta policy modifies future issues of Yes. Of the two periodicals, founded within months of each other in 1958, Delta was the more avant-garde and experimental. Yes favours the older, little-published contemporary poets in Canada, and tends to be gracious, dignified and conservatively modern. The current issue, Number 15, features poet John Glassco and Montreal's Budapest-born artist, George Juhasz. Yes is primarily

a poetry magazine, not given to partisan aesthetics or controversial criticism, and only occasionally to editorializing. At its best, it explores byways of modern poetry in Canada, introducing us to elegant adventurers we might otherwise never meet. Among Little Magazines, Yes stands out like the guest in a tuxedo who mingles, unabashed, with the turtle-neck, sneakers and jeans set.

Sneakers and jeans are much more the style of another Montreal Little Mag called Intercourse (Box 513, Station B, Montreal 2, Quebec). Raymond Fraser and Leroy Johnson are the jesting co-editors of "Canada's literary eighthly." In their first issue they warned correspondents against using the magazine's title on their envelopes because of "possible postal misunderstanding." In their second, they confided their suspicions that certain librarians (those who had not subscribed) were giving too narrow an interpretation to their title. In spite of all this rib-digging, there is little intercourse of any kind in the magazine so far--except the chummy banter between the two editors. Intercourse does have a rather heavy-handed sense of humour, however, and humour is rare enough in Little Magazines. But I ~~am~~ doubt whether Intercourse really is a Little Magazine; despite its tough and sentimental stance, it lacks the notes of protest, experiment or partisan aesthetics that are characteristic of the genre.

Up the Tube with One I Open (North Burnaby, B.C.), on the other hand, displays just these characteristics. Issue #1 offers a sampling of West Coast Poets and states the purpose of the Mag--to provide an outlet for any young poet doing new, experimental things with poetry. "It is our contention that a lot of young poets struggling for publication are doing work superior to a number of established ones." The editors are C. W. Carlson and N. P. Lane. So far it looks like a wobbly offspring of Bill Bissett's Blew Ointment with lots of assistance from father Bissett himself.

Another baby in the Little Magazine field is Is--begotten by Island. Is will be reserved for the Occasional Poem; it will appear occasionally and "will print

the Occasional Epic."

Island Press, by the way, is reprinting four issues of Measure, a magazine edited around the turn of the Sixties by the American poet, John Wieners, who recently opened the series of Poetry Readings to be held throughout this season at Sir George Williams University (50¢ admission).

Other Little Press activity includes the recent publication of Phyllis Webb's Naked Poems by Periwinkle Press. Readers who wish to purchase copies should write to Takao Tanabe at 3939 Viewridge Place, West Vancouver, B.C. (Miss Webb, with Gwendolyn MacEwen, will read their poems on November 18 as the fourth offering in Sir George Williams' series.)

It is rumoured that Contact Press will soon bring out poems by the deceased Vancouver poet, Red Lane. Apparently Lane's impact on several Vancouver poets was powerful. George Bowering has kept his memory alive by way of a moving elegy in Imago 5; and Ganglia Press last year published The 1962 Poems by R. S. Lane, copies of which may still be available. (The address is 477 Brunswick Avenue, Toronto 4, Ontario.)

A new and intriguing Little Press is The Coachhouse Press, run by Stan Bevington, who actually lives, and has his printing shop in an old coachhouse in Toronto (317 Bathurst Street, Toronto, Ontario). So far three titles have appeared under this imprint--Man in a Window, by Wayne Clifford, New Wings for Icarus, by Henry Beissel and The LSD Leacock, by Joe Rosenblatt (a young Toronto poet with a wild and original talent). All Coach House books so far have been well-printed and attractively illustrated.

Another Westerner who has moved to Montreal recently is Roy Kiyooka, painter, and professor in the Fine Arts Department at Sir George Williams University. Kiyooka disclaims the title of poet. "I'm a painter--and perhaps a 'Sunday poet,' if you like." Nevertheless, a volumn of Kiyooka's poems will appear this month printed by Bev Leech. The title is Nevertheless, These Eyes.

One more Little Press, sprung up recently, is Weed/Flower (4-22 Young Street, Kitchener, Ontario). Titles to its credit so far are Room of Clocks, by Nelson Ball, Ottawa Poems, by William Hawkins and The Windows, by Carlos Reyes (editor of the bilingual Little Mag Pot-Pourri emanating from Oregon). Weed/Flower Press also publishes Weed, a bimonthly of poetry now in its fifth issue.

Three most recent entries into the Little Mag field are Now, edited by Milton Acorn et al (3712 West 10th Avenue, Vancouver, B.C.); The Spanish Fleye (Toronto); and Pop-See-Cul (Montreal).

Finally--a most interesting anthology of Canadian poetry comes from Miami, Florida. It is Vol. 2, No. 3 of The Human Voice, devoted exclusively to "The Canadian Poets." The selections were made by R. H. Flood, an American now working as a Librarian at St. Michael's College, Toronto. Liberal representation is given of Birney, Layton, Avison, Souster, Reaney, Purdy, McRobbie, Cohen and Nowlan. Dudek is there too, but in a delightful (and all too rare) comic guise. I was particularly intrigued by the Introduction, written by the publishers and intended for an American audience. It reads in part:

"Historically Canadian poetry is much younger than American poetry. It is not, however, less sophisticated and rewarding, in many ways it is richer than our own. The academic climate is one of adventure--certainly more adventuresome than America's. Nor is poetry officially frowned upon. Although Canada is a younger nation than America she has preceded America by more than a decade in the 'official' recognition and endowment of the arts, especially poetry. While President Kennedy set up the process of the National Foundation On The Arts And Humanities, and President Johnson has indeed established the process, America is yet provincial in its official attitude to the arts. At the close of 1966 the National Foundation is little more than an investigatory committee. Canada, on the other hand, has been actually patronizing the arts for over a decade. Nationally compared, the

Foundation of the U.S.A. would have been established about 1860, or at the time of its own Civil War."